1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

for the sleeping places of grandparents or parents-in-law, which are avoided out of respect, these sleeping places serve as seats in the daytime. In the centre of the dividing wall is the cooking place; this is a built-up square of pounded earth and clay, perhaps five feet in each direction and raised about a foot off the ground; into this while it is still soft are inserted four upright stones to support the cooking pots over the logs of wood. Above the fire-place is a drying ledge of woven bamboo hanging from the rafters. There is a very fragile ceiling of bamboo which serves as a store-house; it is entered through a trap-door which is placed nearly directly above the cooking-place so as to allow the smoke to escape and which is reached by a notched log.

The dividing wall which separates the two rooms is usually a wooden partition (occasionally bamboo) with a door, or at least a door-frame, in the side nearest the balcony. This second room is called *dé-ong*. In the houses of lamas and of the more pious laymen there is an altar against the south wall. This altar varies enormously with the wealth and inclinations of the individual; some of the most elaborate are miniature reproductions of the altars in the monastery, with large metal images and musical instruments and other decorations; and in one or two houses there are pigeon-holes on either side containing the sixteen volumes of the Boom, the shortened version of the Kangyour. In other houses the altar is no more than a wooden box set up on end, with one small metal image inside, and sometimes not even that.

The *dé-ong*, whether it is fitted up as a private lamaist temple or not, is always more or less of a ceremonial room, for in it are performed the numerous ceremonies which occur in the life of everyone, for feared or actual illness or death, or for marriage. Ordinarily the room is little used and is only slept in by lamas, and not always by them. The attitude to the *dé-ong* is similar to that held towards the parlour in lower-middle-class English homes. It is the place where distinguished visitors are received, where emotionally important events of a slightly ceremonious nature take place; it is not a room which is used by the family in ordinary everyday life. In one or two houses there is a small and narrow store-room beyond the *dé-ong*; in other houses the *dé-ong* is used for this purpose also. Heads of maize and millet are suspended from the bamboo ceiling to dry, and sacks of grain and flour are kept under the altar. People fetching stores from this place are meant to prostrate themselves three times at each visit, but usually

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

793
346

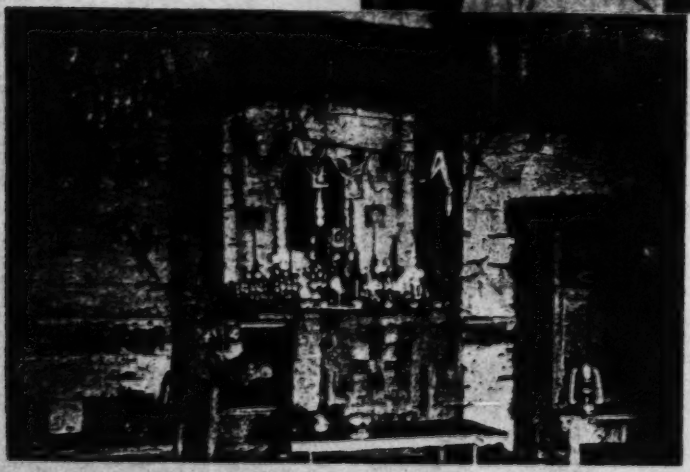
Inebus performing their ceremony of circumambulating the monastery.

142
291

Hlatám, the alleged poisoner.

Domestic altar in the private house of a Lama. Note the reserve store of maize hanging from the rafters on the left; and on the right a hurricane lantern, one of the treasures of the house.

778
251
373



[facing p. 77]

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

it is usual to call in some experienced old man to fasten such things up. None of the things had been removed from the house while the roof was being repaired. It is said that a new roof lasts for about seven years, after which it must be completely renewed. No nails are used in the construction of houses, all woodwork being mortised and tied where necessary with canes. Even large buildings like the monastery are constructed entirely without nails.

* * * * *

There is no furniture in Lepcha houses; beds, tables (except the low Tibetan variety), and chairs being unknown. The kitchen stove is merely a platform of earth, on which some half-dozen large stones are placed as supports for the cooking pots. These are generally of copper or brass, and I never once saw any kind of earthenware vessel and was told they were never used. Stores of maize and millet hang from the rafters, and other grains are kept in baskets stacked against the walls. The family bedding may generally be seen draped across these baskets during the day-time; and unwanted clothing is suspended from bamboo slivers inserted in cracks in the walls. I occasionally noticed that the walls had been papered with old newspapers. One such was plastered with years-old copies of the *Evening News*, one of which advertised the film of "Bengal Lancer"; but how these ever reached Lingtem is beyond my comprehension. Our own cast-off papers were always in much demand, one man in particular asking constantly for pictures of wars. He seemed to think that war was a fine experience, and talked of little else, although of course he had never seen one. Anyhow, the walls of his cottage are no longer bare: and for the rest of his life he can sit in peace while gazing at pictures of Franco's atrocities. I hope sincerely that this is the nearest to war he will get.

Water is brought in long hollow bamboos and stored in copper pots, of the type that form part of the marriage gifts. These do not hold more than a couple of gallons, and are

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

also used for cooking rice. It is sometimes the custom to pickle corpses when, for instance, it is desired to postpone burial until some auspicious day. Large copper vessels, as big as a barrel, are used for this purpose; in Lingtem there were only two. These belonged to the Mandal, who kindly lent us one to store our water! It was near to the time of departure, however, before I realised their proper function. The Mandal assured us that, in point of fact, no corpse had ever been stored in our particular pot; but I feel sure that he thought we were being unduly squeamish. Perhaps we were.

Both rooms of a house are normally used for sleeping, but there is some sort of idea that if the inner room contains an altar (which is not always the case) it should be slept in only by Lamas: this rule, however, like many others, seems to be disregarded. Only the outer clothing is removed at night, and the people sleep on the floor. There is little attempt at privacy; nor indeed would this be possible where as many as fifteen people, as was the case in Tafoor's house for instance, have to be accommodated in two small rooms. This is perhaps an extreme instance; but it is unusual, except in the case of an elderly childless couple, to find less than four or five people occupying one room.

Men wear a pair of loosely-cut cotton shorts and a cotton shirt of Tibetan pattern. The shorts are made unnecessarily large in the waist, the surplus being folded over and tucked in in order to keep them up. Both these articles are made from machine-made material, and are usually obtained (at exorbitant prices) from Hindu shopkeepers in Mangen. On top of them they generally wear the Lepcha *dum-dyum*, an attractive home-spun garment woven from imported white cotton with a typical striped design in red, blue, and yellow. This is no longer much made in Lingtem, and is usually obtained from some other Lepcha village. The Lingtem people seem to think they are better employed in tending their crops, and that it is really cheaper to buy their cloth rather than have the women make it at home. It seems a pity. The *dum-dyum* is not a made-up garment